

CC: 96-45

Affordability of Telephone Service

A Survey of Customers and Non-Customers

conducted by

Field Research Corporation

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jointly funded by

GTE and Pacific Bell

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Research Overview

Broad objectives:

- (1) To determine *reasons for not having telephone service*
- (2) To explore the *affordability* of telephone service
- (3) To provide a means for *updating* telephone penetration

Two studies undertaken:

- (a) *Non-Customer Survey* (in areas with less than 90% telephone penetration, U.S. Census, 1990)
- (b) *Customer Survey*

Non-Customer Survey: Overview of Design Plan

- *S.F. Bay Area, L.A./Orange, San Diego, Fresno, Sacramento*
- *Block Clusters with less than 90% penetration identified*
- *250 Block Clusters selected using systematic random sampling*
- *In each Block Cluster, interviewers listed 60 households, attempted to interview all non-customers (17,215 households in total)*
- *For every non-customer interviewed, the next available customer of the same ethnicity was interviewed*
- *Interviewed 571 Non-customers, 566 Matched Customers*

Other Study Details

Interviewing subcontracted to ethnic minority-owned businesses.

Each Block Cluster showed ethnic make-up of the cluster so interviewers could be matched to the predominant ethnicity/race.

Questionnaires translated into Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese.
Bilingual interviewers were used for Hispanic and Asian clusters.

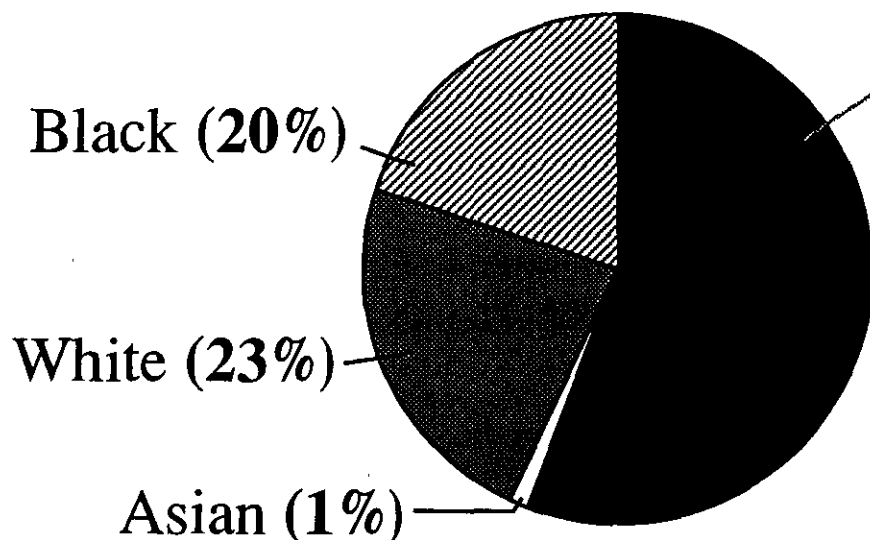
Interviewers given intensive training and carefully monitored throughout the project. To help in obtaining high cooperation rates interviewers carried with them:

- An ID badge with GTE or Pacific Bell name

- A set of letters in English, Spanish and the three Asian languages from well known community leaders endorsing the study

Field Dates: September 14 through October 31, 1993

Characteristics of Non-Customers



Hispanic (56%)

Prefer Spanish 65%

Prefer English 17%

No preference 17%

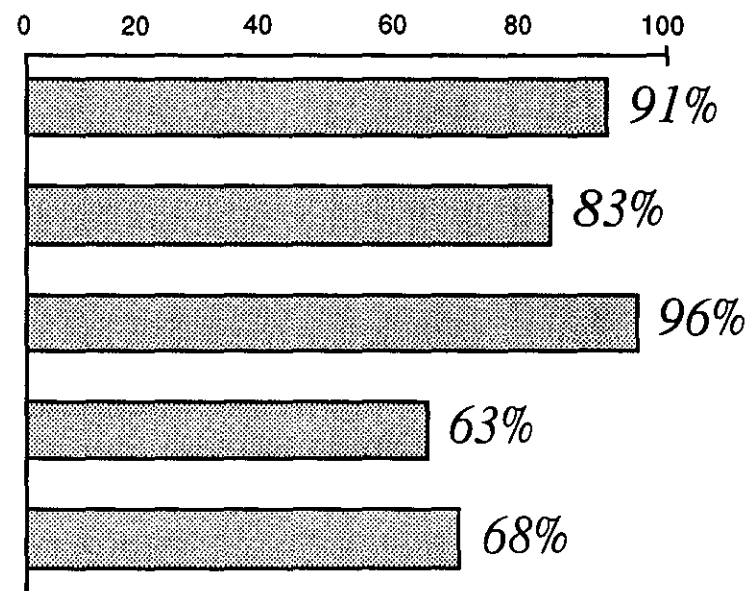
Aware Spanish speaking representatives (a)

Meet ULTS qualifications

Rent

3 or more members in household

Under 40 years old



(a) among Hispanics

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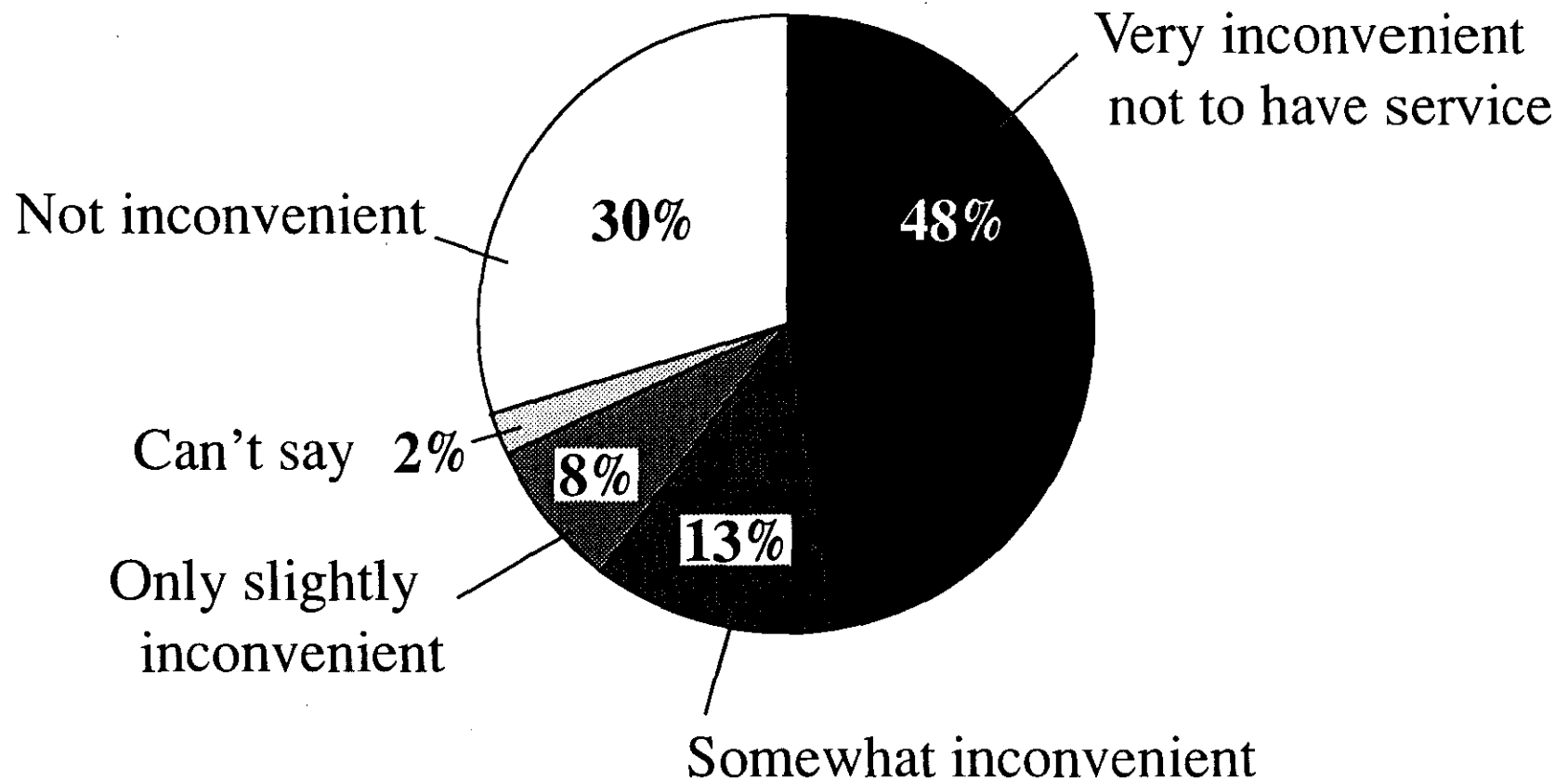
Non-Customers vs. Matched Customers

- *Non-Customers have just slightly lower household incomes on average*
- *But, are much more mobile than their customer counterparts*

	<u>Low Telephone Penetration Areas</u>		
	<u>Non-Customers</u>	<u>Matched Customers</u>	<u>Difference in percentages</u>
Lived at current address less than 1 year	52%	27%	+25
\$15,300 or less (household income)	67%	57%	+10
Less than high school	47%	42%	+5
Average age	35	40	-5
Married	35%	46%	-11

Attitude toward Not Having Phone Service

- Most, but not all, non-customers find it inconvenient*



Telephone Usage Patterns of Non-Customers

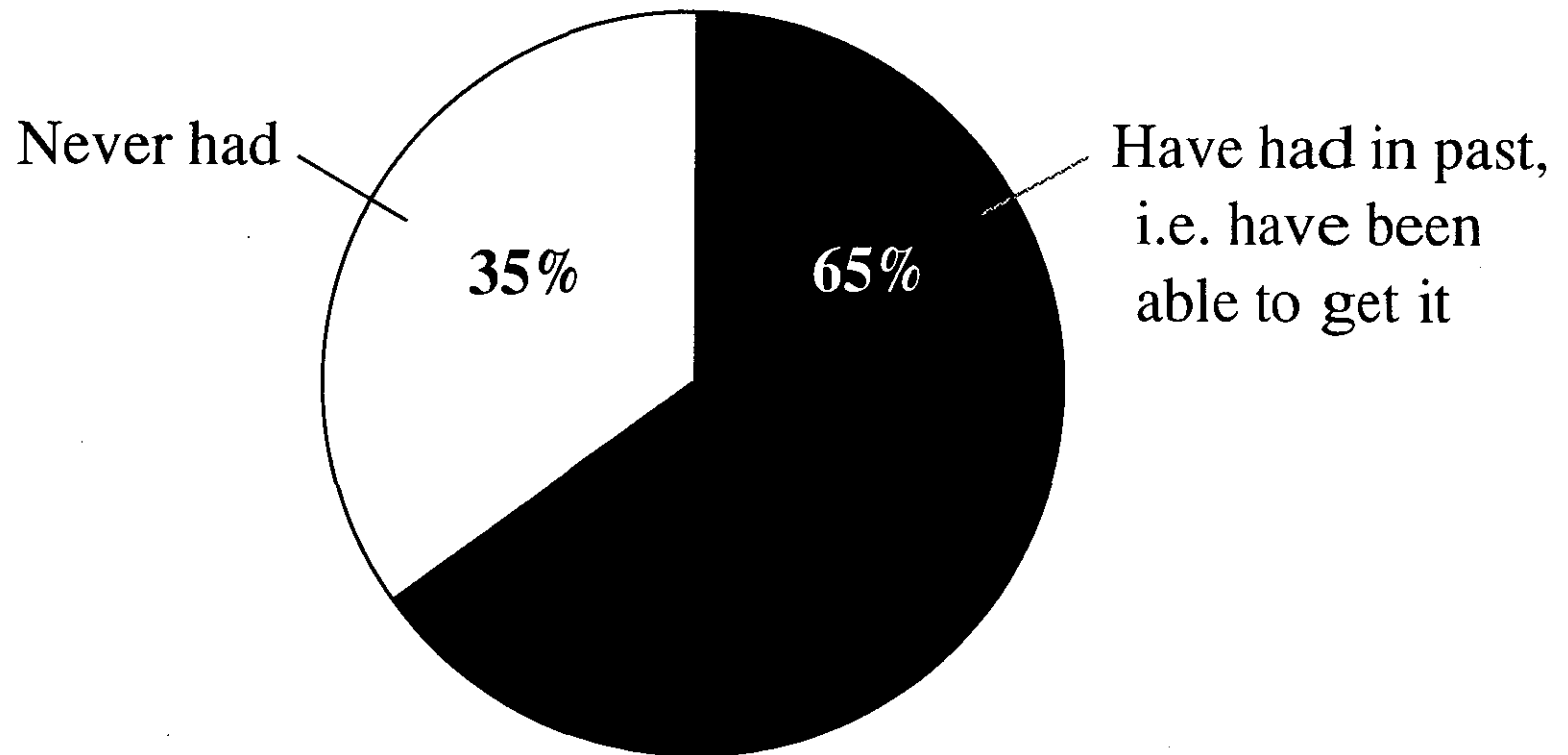
	<u>Non- Customers</u>
<i>Usually use —</i>	
Public, pay phone	65%
Friend, neighbors' phone	34
Average # calls/week	9
Average # pay phone calls/week	5
Median \$/month	\$5
<i>In emergency, nearest phone —</i>	
In same building	42
Elsewhere	55
Median minutes to reach	3

Telephone Usage Patterns of Non-Customers

	<u>Very Inconvenient</u>	<u>Slightly/ Somewhat</u>	<u>Not Inconvenient</u>
<i>Usually use —</i>			
Public, pay phone	71%	67%	54%
Friend, neighbors' phone	33	38	32
Average # calls/week	10	6	8
Average # pay phone calls/week	8	3	2
Median \$/month	\$7	\$5	\$3
<i>In emergency, nearest phone —</i>			
In same building	34	49	48
Elsewhere	65	48	47
Median minutes to reach	4	2	2

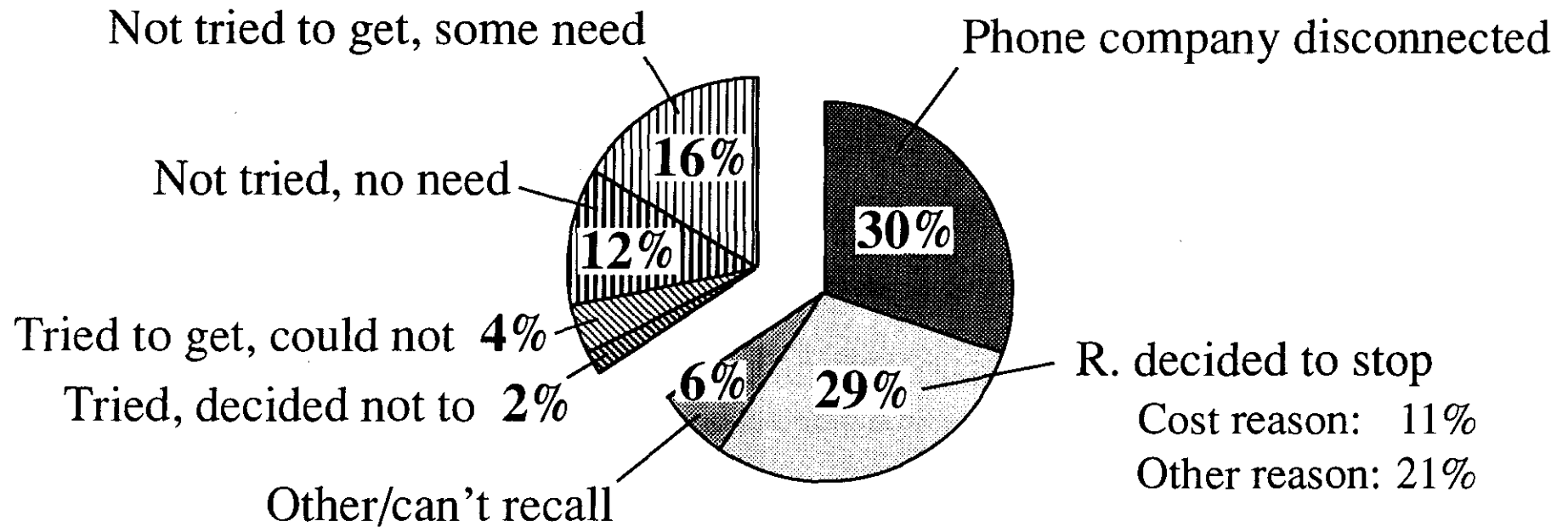
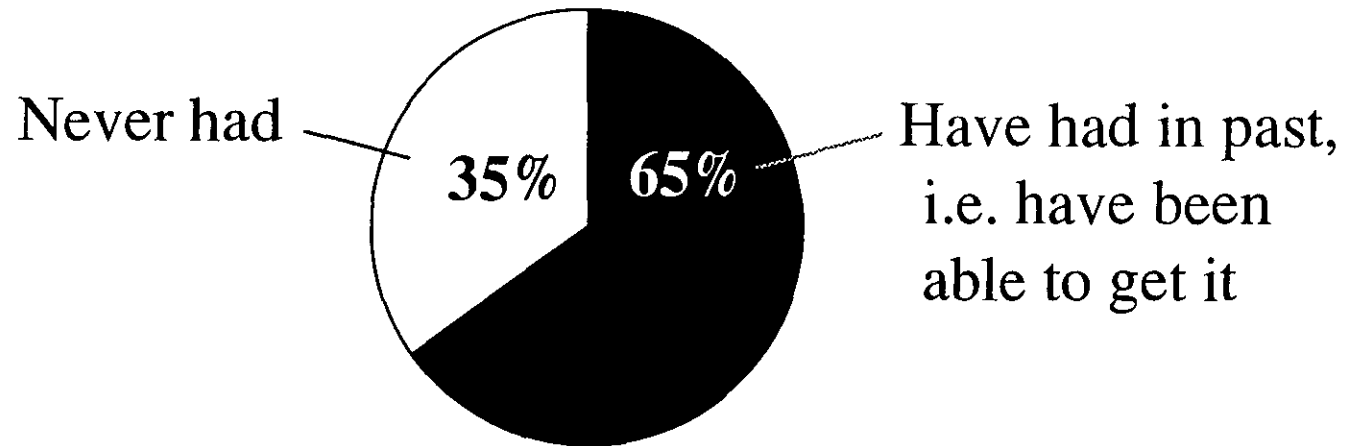
Past Experiences with Phone Service

- *Most non-customers have been able to get phone service*



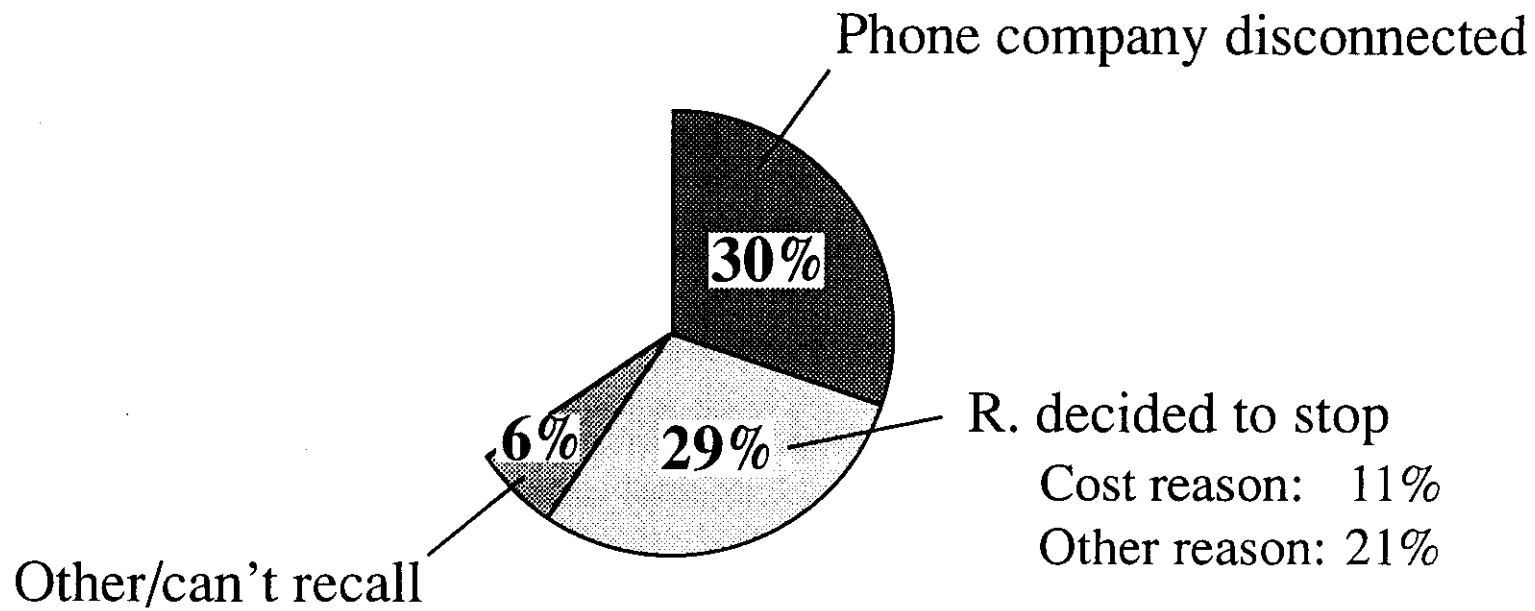
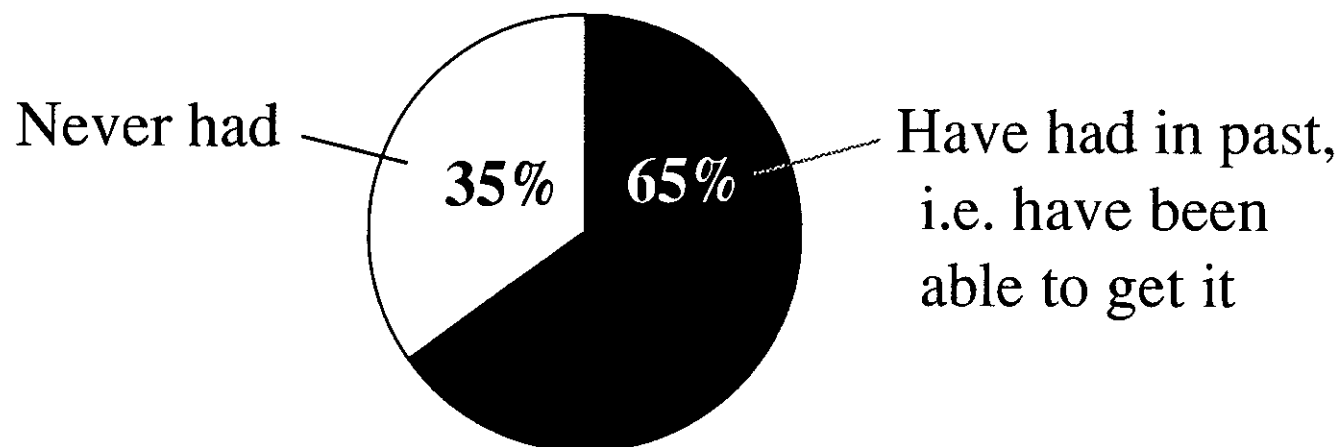
Past Experiences with Phone Service

Non-customers



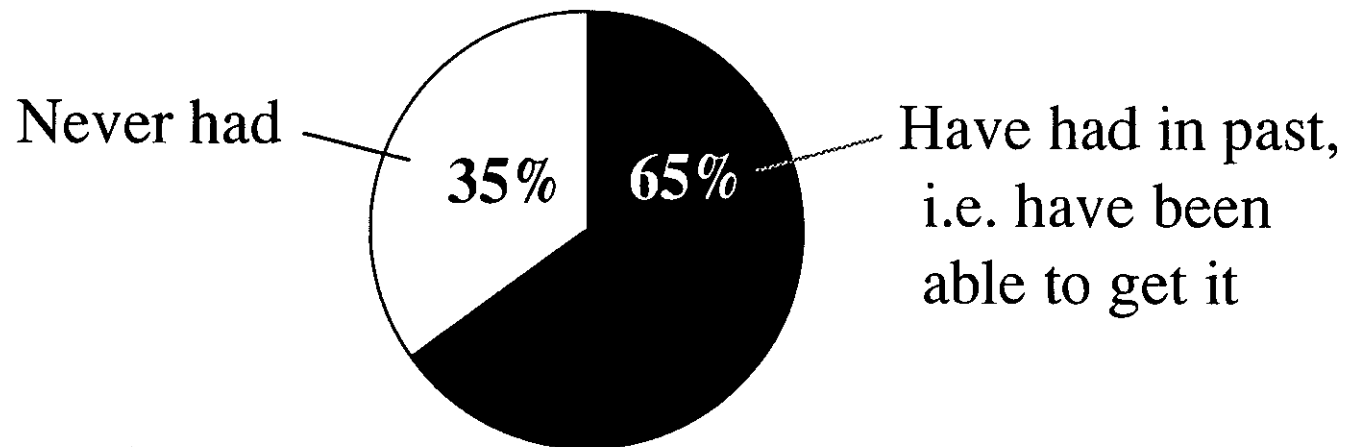
Past Experiences with Phone Service

Non-customers



Past Experiences with Phone Service

Non-customers

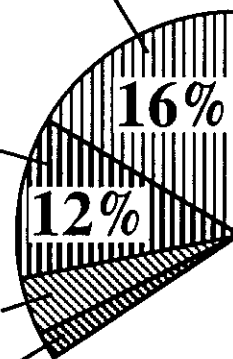


Not tried to get, some need

Not tried, no need

Tried to get, could not

Tried, decided not to



Feelings about Calling Phone Company

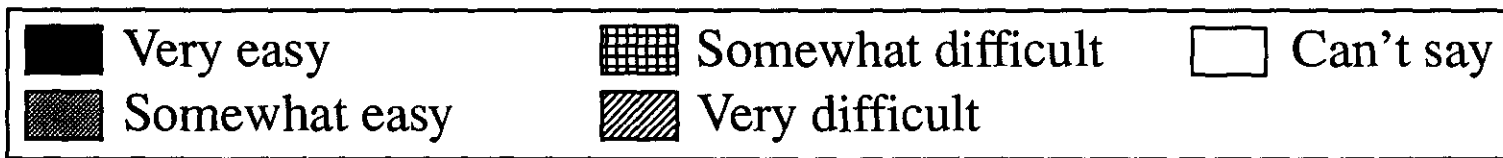
- *Lack of knowledge, fears, discomfort about calling phone company are NOT major barriers to getting phone service*
 - *68% feel comfortable calling the phone company.*
 - *62% think they could get phone service if they wanted to.*
 - *Fears/worries about calling the phone company rank low as reasons for not having phone service.*
 - *Awareness of Spanish speaking representatives is very high (91% of Hispanic non-customers aware).*
 - *65% have been able to get phone service.*

Reasons Don't Have Phone Service (Non-Customers)

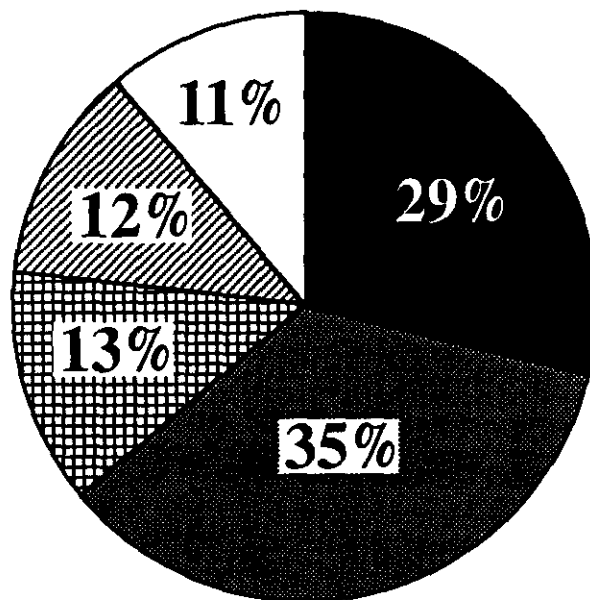
- *Analysis of 17 Specific Reasons*

	<u>Non- Customers</u>
Cost related reasons	56%
Trouble controlling calls	35
No need for it	27
Fear/worry/discomfort calling phone company	11

Perceived Affordability of Telephone Service



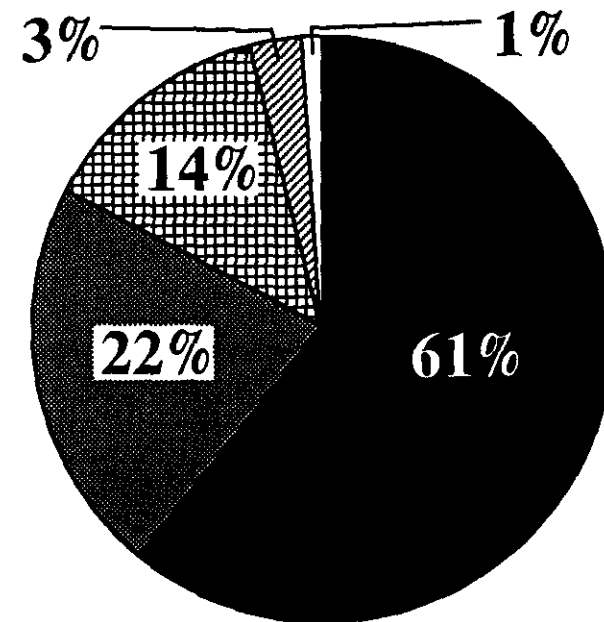
Non-Customers



Expected bill:

Median	\$29
Average	\$42

Matched Customers



Total monthly bill (a)

Median	\$48
Average	\$64

(a) Among those who receive 1 bill (85%)

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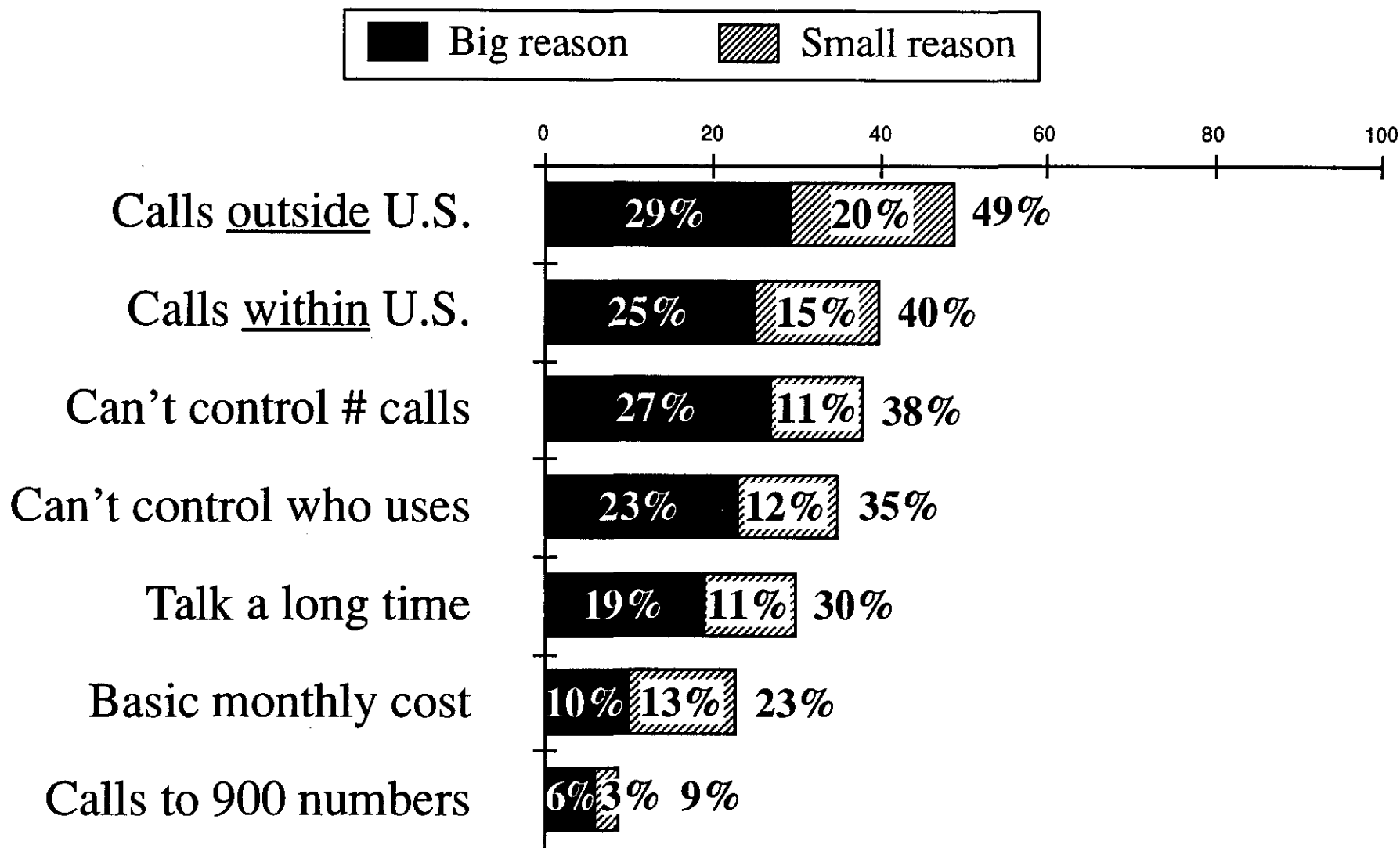
What Affects Perceived Affordability?

- *Perceptions of cost more so than income affect perceived affordability*

	Think phone service would be —		
	<u>Very easy to afford</u>	<u>Somewhat easy</u>	<u>Difficult</u>
<i>What non-customers think it would cost —</i>			
Total monthly bill (average)	\$32	\$41	\$56
To start service (average)	\$49	\$64	\$61
Believe deposit is required	<u>54%</u>	<u>60%</u>	<u>70%</u>
Average amount	\$59	\$78	\$78
Cost of phone itself (average)	\$43	\$30	\$39
<i>Household income</i>			
\$15,300 or less	64	68	66
Meet ULTS qualifications	81	83	84
Employed	42	41	28

What Makes Phone Service Hard to Afford?

- *Cost of calls, inability to control these costs*



(base = those who qualify for ULTS and say their expected ULTS bill would be less than very easy to afford)

Awareness of ULTS

Low Telephone Penetration Areas

Residential customers

Matched customers

Non- customers

*Heard of something called
Universal Lifeline Telephone Service?*

Yes (know by name)

48%

61%

40%

Yes, but cannot describe
Not heard of

23
30

9
32

14
46

*Aware special service for
lower income households?*

Yes (know by generic)

29%

12%

NA

Total "know of" service

76%

73%

40%-58%

NA = Not available. Not asked due to clerical error in final proofing of questionnaire.

Reactions to ULTS (When Described in Detail)

- *Considerable lack of understanding/awareness of some key elements of ULTS among non-customers*

	<u>Non- Customers</u>
Say can afford ULTS installation (a)	89%
Say installation is <u>less</u> than thought	63%
<u>Not</u> aware can spread payments out (among phone company disconnects)	66%
<u>Not</u> aware there is no deposit (among those who have not had disconnect)	85%

(a) \$23 GTE; \$17.38 PB

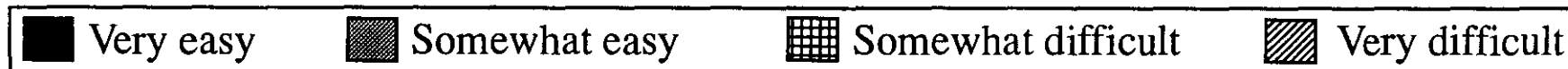
(base = qualify for ULTS)

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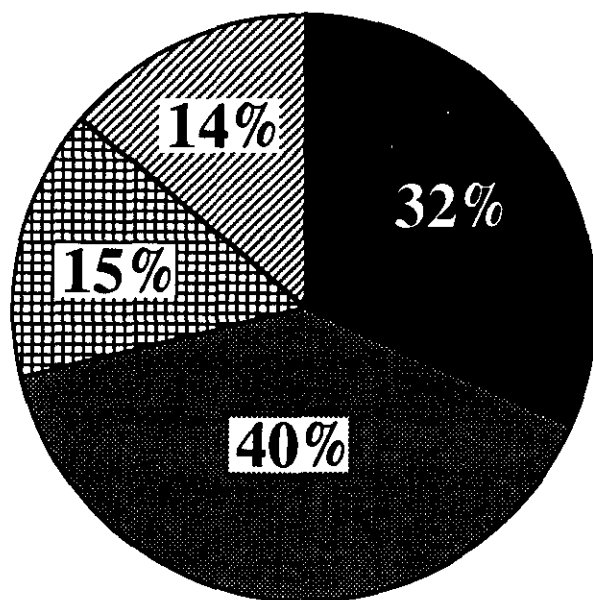
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Reactions to ULTS (after Described in Detail)

- Knowledge of ULTS increases affordability*



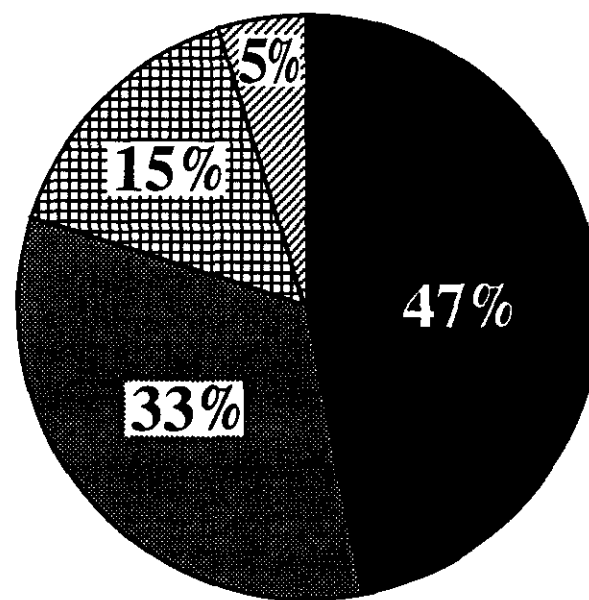
Before ULTS



Expected bill:

Median \$28

After ULTS

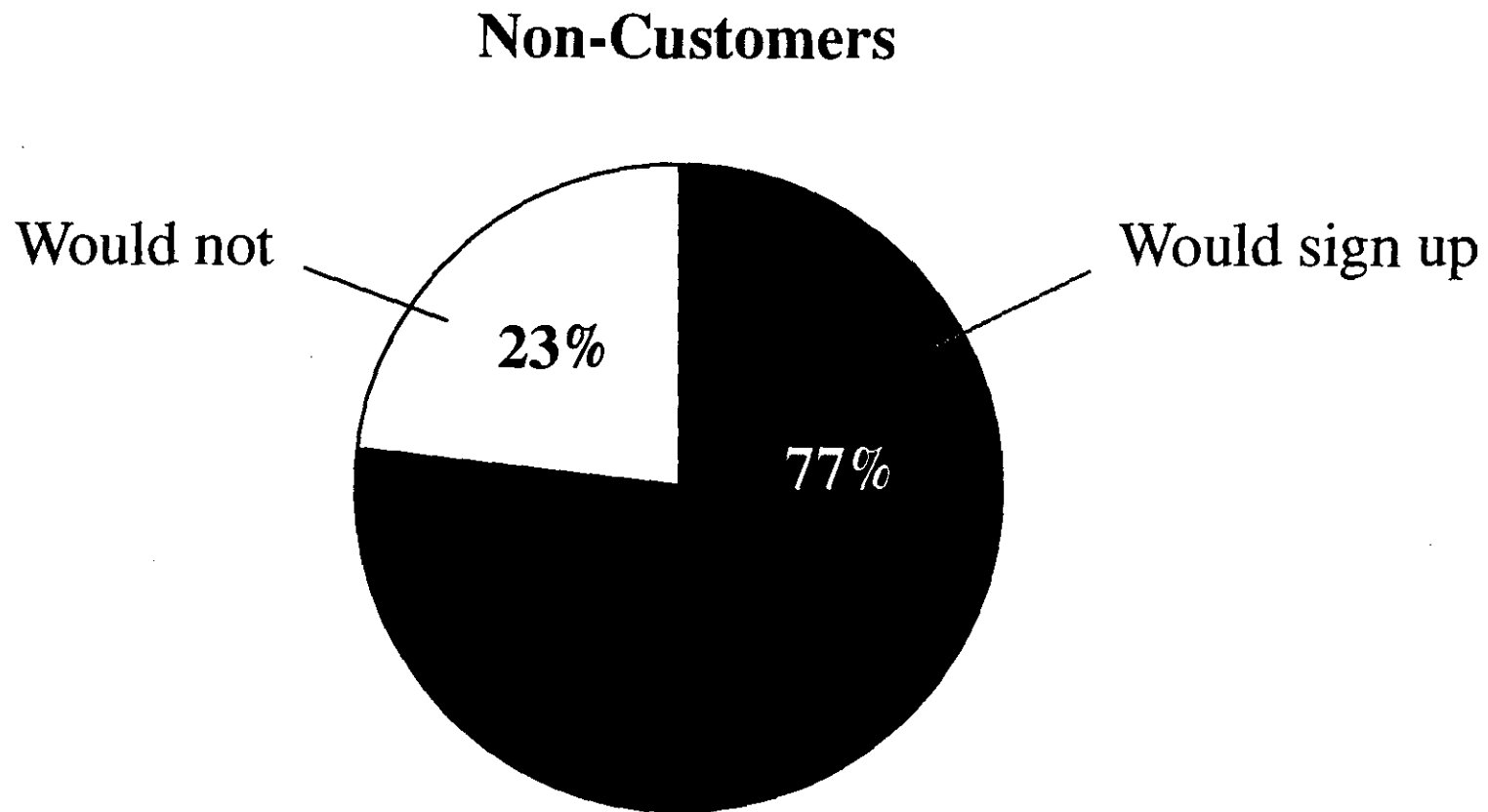


Expected bill:

Median \$19

(base = those who qualify for ULTS)

Interest in ULTS (after Described)



Customer Survey: Overview of Design Plan

- *By telephone, in 5 languages*
- *All GTE/PB service areas*

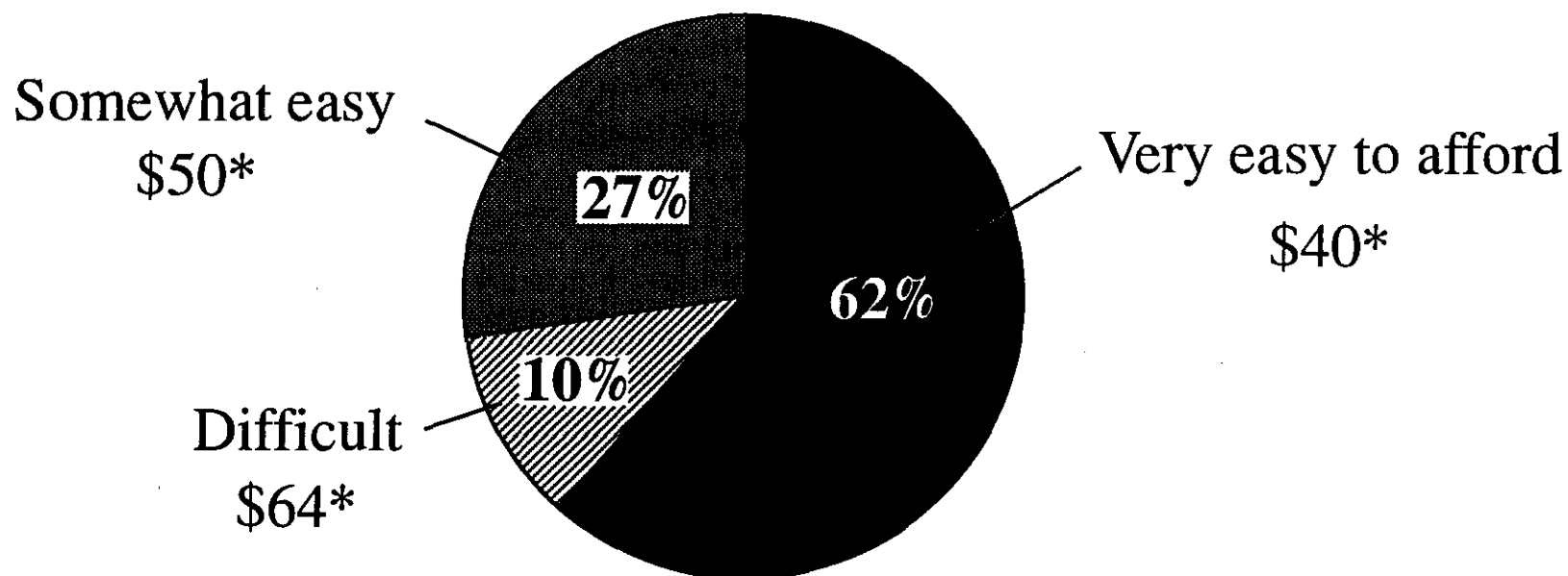
	<u>Total</u>	<u>GTE</u>	<u>PB</u>	<u>% interviewed in native language</u>
Residential customers (all samples)	<u>3,656</u>	<u>1,817</u>	<u>1,839</u>	
ULTS subscribers	1,297	550	747	
ULTS eligible (low income)	1,280	592	688	
Hispanic customers	766	354	412	49%
Black customers	375	175	200	
Chinese customers	317	156	161	58%
Korean customers	306	154	152	94%
Vietnamese customers	308	156	152	96%
Low income seniors	428	207	221	

Field Dates: September 20 through October 28, 1993.

Customer Survey

- *Most, but not all, find telephone service affordable*

Residential Customers



Have had financial difficulty paying bill	<u>12%</u>
Often	6
Not often	6

* median total monthly bill, among those who receive 1 bill (90% of all customers)

Examination of 12% “At Risk”

- *Lower income, higher bills, more IEC charges*

	Find phone service —		
	<u>Very easy to afford</u>	<u>Somewhat easy</u>	<u>Difficult ("At Risk")</u>
Household income			
\$25,100 or less	34%	44%	62%
Average monthly bill (a)			
Median	\$40	\$50	\$64
Total GTE/PB charges	\$21	\$25	\$26
% of bill — (b)			
GTE/PB	53	50	41
IEC	47	50	59

(a) among those who receive 1 bill (90% of all customers)

(b) rough estimation using respondent testimony for total monthly bill and company records for GTE/PB portion.

Perceived Affordability by Type of Service

- *ULTS no easier to afford than regular rate service among lower income households*

	<u>Regular flat rate</u>	<u>Regular meas. rate</u>	<u>ULTS Qualified</u>	
			<u>Have ULTS</u>	<u>Don't have</u>
Very easy to afford	63%	67%	54%	56%
Somewhat easy	26	26	29	25
Difficult	10	5	15	17
Have financial difficulty paying bill (total)	<u>10%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>19%</u>
Often	5	4	10	10
GTE/PB bill (median) (a)	\$25	\$16	\$14	\$24
Total monthly bill (median) (b)	\$48	\$32	\$39	\$42

(a) from company records

(b) respondent testimony, among those who receive 1 bill (90% of all customers)

Awareness of ULTS

Low Telephone Penetration Areas

Matched customers

Non- customers

*Heard of something called
Universal Lifeline Telephone Service?*


Yes (know by name)

61%


40%

Yes, but cannot describe
Not heard of

9
32



14
46



*Aware special service for
lower income households?*

Yes (know by generic)

12%

NA

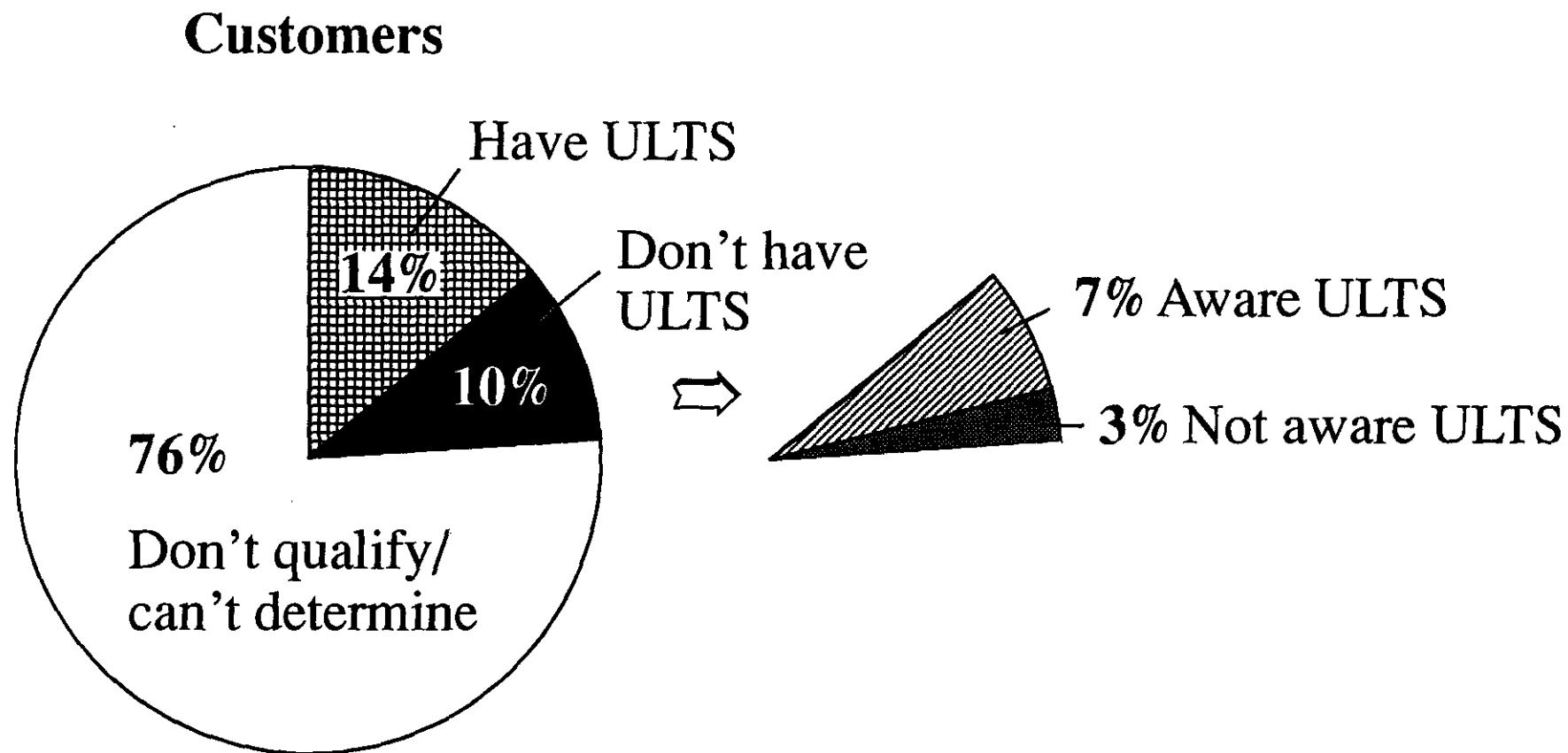
Total "know of" service

73%

40%-58%

NA = Not available. Not asked due to clerical error in final proofing of questionnaire.

ULTS Penetration (Among Those Who Qualify)



Interest in ULTS (among Qualified, Don't Have)

Told "with ULTS, you would still pay whatever you do now for calls (but) save about (\$5.88)/(\$5.17) per month (for) FLAT RATE or (\$3.62)/(\$3.22) (for) MEASURED RATE."

*Given those savings,
this would be —*

Much easier to afford

A little easier to afford

No easier to afford

Can't say

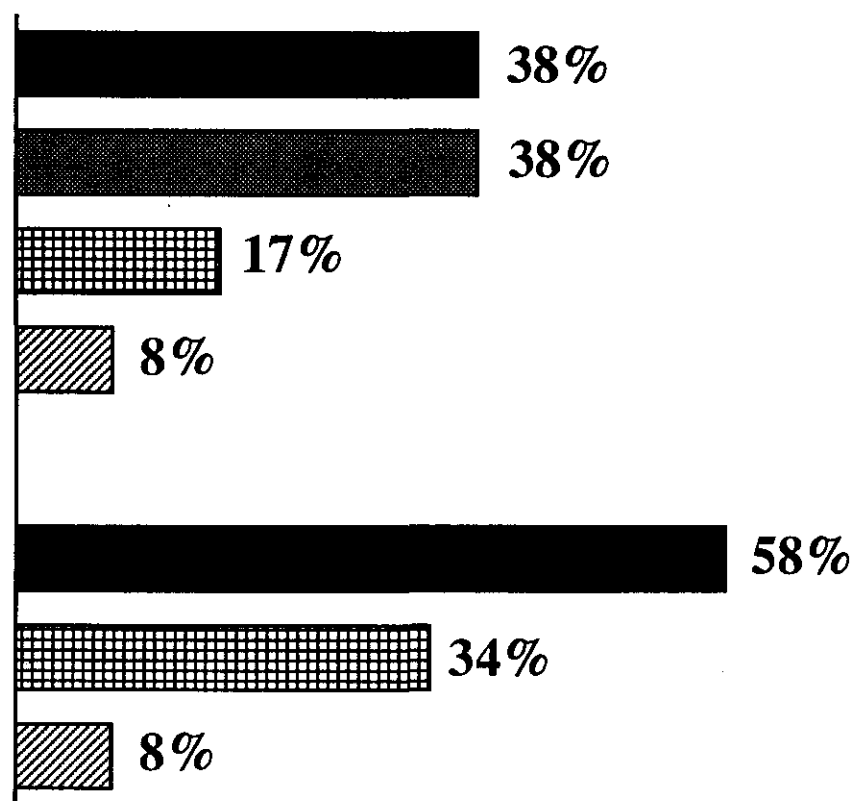
Assuming eligible, would —

Sign up

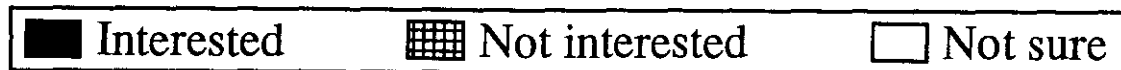
Continue as now

Can't say

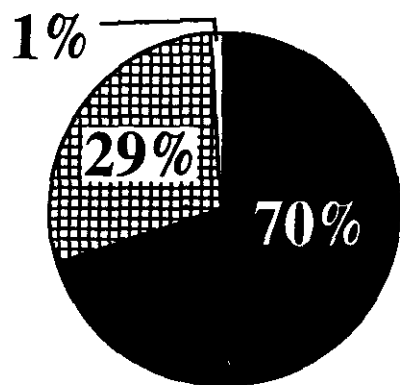
**Customers who qualify but don't have ULTS
(10% of all customers)**



Interest in Call Control Service (a)

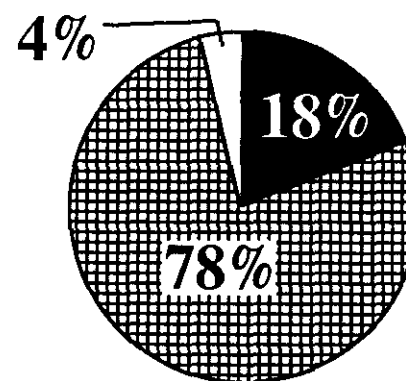


Non-customers*

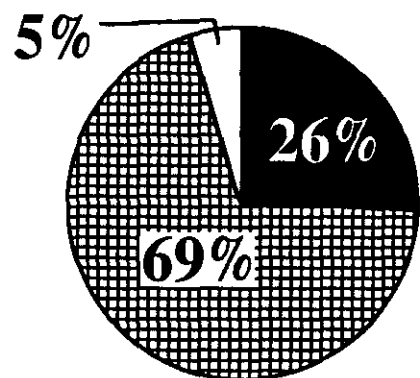


* base = qualify for ULTS

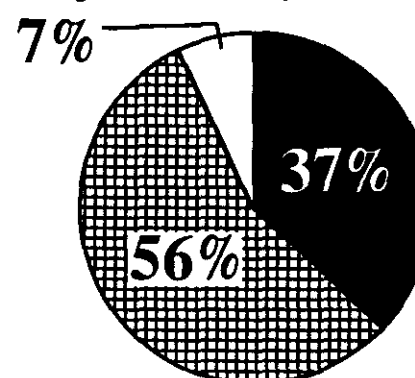
Customers



ULTS Subscribers



Qualify ULTS, Don't Have



(a) "What if there were some way for you to control the calls that cost extra? For example, the phone company could set some limit on those calls so you would not go over that limit... would you be interested in this type of service or not?"

Conclusions

- Non-customer segment includes many who get service, then lose it.
- Leaves very few households who feel a need for it but have not had it.
- Reflects efforts to increase accessibility and make it easier for those who want to get onto the network. Such efforts must continue, but other, new efforts are required.
- Stop in and out movement

Customer survey

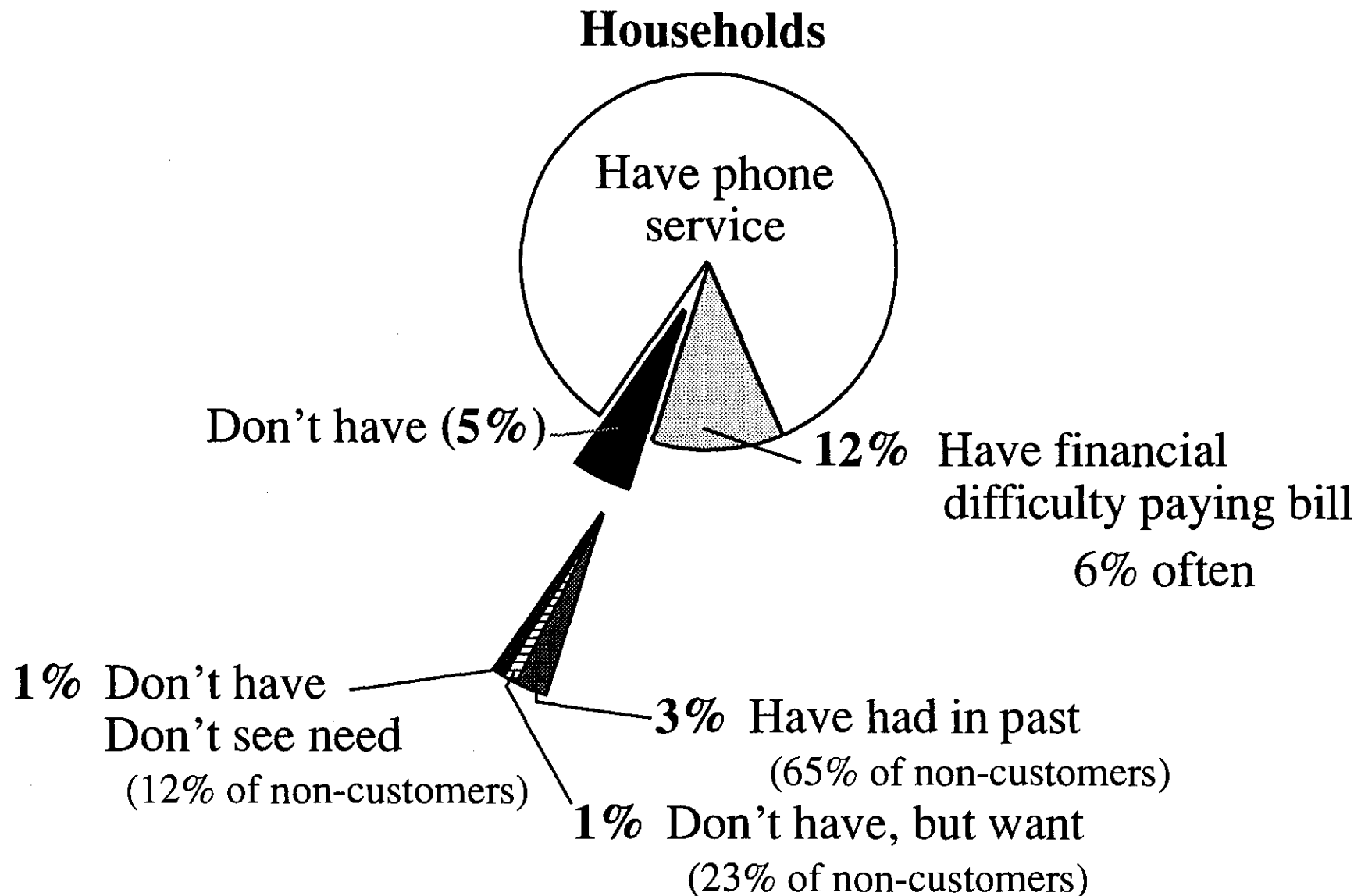
12% at risk

Non-customer survey

65% had it, lost it

Importance of Retention for Improving Penetration

- *Using 5% non-penetration only as example*



4 Key Issues for Policy Planners

(1) Retention: keeping customers on network

Call control: LEC and IEC

Mobility

Custom Calling Services (CCS)

(2) Education: awareness of costs, ULTS specifics

Startup costs

Deposit requirements

Installment option (for paying amounts due)

(3) Product: ULTS does not address some key needs

No more affordable than regular rate

Basic service only small part of most bills

Name is not synergistic with purpose

4 Key Issues for Policy Planners (continued)

(4) Different strategies for different groups

